R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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CHILDREN CAN BE TAUGHT TO SPELL.

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RESEARCH WITH STUDENTS IN GRADES 6, 7, AND 8 DEMONSTRATED THAT CHILDREN CAN BE TAUGHT TO SPELL IF--(1) EACH CHILD USES A SPELLING PROGRAM GEARED TO HIS OWN LEARNING LEVEL, DEVELOPS HIS OWN SYSTEM OF LEARNING TO SPELL, WORKS ON WORDS NOT YET MASTERED, AND REALIZES CONTINUING SUCCESS, AND (2) THE TEACHING METHOD DEVELOPS THE PUPIL'S LISTENING SKILLS, REACHES INTO ALL CURRICULAR AREAS, AND CHALLENGES THE STUDENT EDUCATIONALLY. ALL STUDENTS IN THE EXPERIMENT USED THE SAME BASIC WORD LIST. CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTY AND AVERAGE-ABILITY STUDENTS ATTEMPTED TO MASTER FROM FIVE TO 26 WORDS EACH WEEK, WHEREAS ACCELERATED STUDENTS RECEIVED 36 WORDS. NEW WORDS WERE PRONOUNCED EACH MONDAY, AND STUDENTS STUDIED THEIR SPELLING, DEFINITIONS, AND USAGE UNTIL THE FOLLOWING FRIDAY. THOSE MAKING ERRORS ON FRIDAY'S TEST PREPARED AN ANALYSIS SHEET FOR EACH ERROR AND TOOK A CHECK TEST THE NEXT WEDNESDAY OVER THOSE ERRORS. STUDENTS TAUGHT BY THIS METHOD AVERAGED FEWER SPELLING ERRORS ON WORD LISTS AND IN THEMES THAN DID STUDENTS IN THE CONTROL GROUP. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL," VOL. 63, NO. 2, MARCH 1967. (RD)

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to read | to write | to speak

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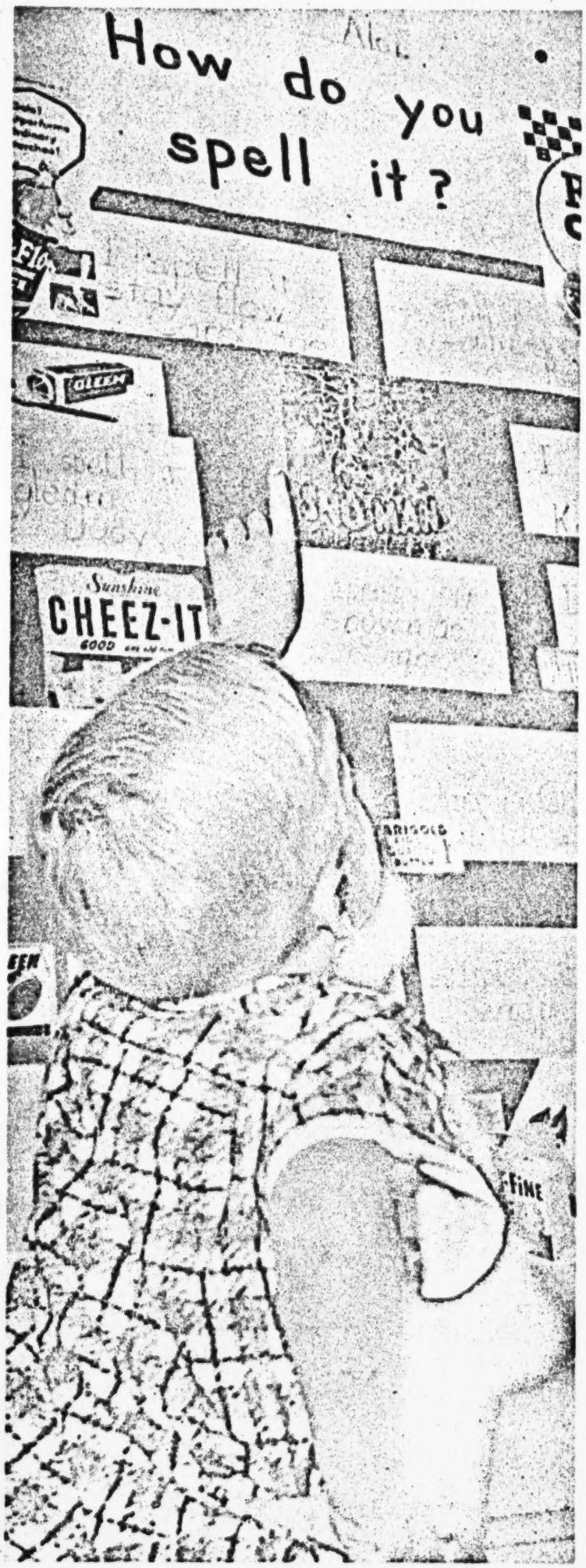

SAN BERNARDINO SCHOOLS BULLETIN

CHILDREN CAN BE TAUGHT TO spell

By Paris B. Simmons

AFTER four years of experimentation and research, I am prepared to prove that children can successfully be taught to spell. My conclusions are based on these theories:

The individual learner must develop his own system of learning to spell.

Children should spend time working with words they have not yet mastered, rather than waste time on unnecessary drill.

Each child must use a spelling program geared to his own level of learning.

The approach to the teaching of spelling should properly reach into all areas of the curriculum.

Development of the pupil's listening skills is important to the success of the teaching method.

The approach must be an educational challenge to the student and he must note continuing success.

The teacher's correcting time and instruction time with the "new method" must not exceed that of existing programs.

At the beginning of the program, students are "paced" in accordance with their ability to spell. Although all students use the same word lists, the class is divided into three groups. The "specially paced," those children having learning difficulty, receive 5 to

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26 words a week, the number increasing as their skills develop. The second group, "regular paced," take the entire basic word list each week. The third group of accelerated students take the basic list plus an additional ten words of greater difficulty.

The basic word lists draw from each subject of the curriculum. Each Monday the teacher announces a new list of words, pronouncing each word carefully. He repeats if necessary, but gives no clues to spelling or definition. This announcement is invariably oral.

Students have until the following Friday to learn the spelling, definition, and usage of the words given. A test is given each Friday. Children missing words on the test are required to prepare a special analysis sheet for each error. To date, in my experience, no child who has correctly filled out the analysis sheet has misspelled the word in the check test.

Check tests are dictated each Wednesday on the previous week's list. Only those students who have completed their analysis sheets take the test, and they write only the words they missed on the previous test.

Record-keeping and grading must be designed so that the student and his parents are continuously aware of his progress.

In my "new approach" at Benjamin Franklin Intermediate School in Daly City a control group of 115 eighth-graders that had used the California state spelling book for 26 to 30 weeks made 865 errors in a word list of 26 words taken from the speller. The experimental group of 96 students, with no formal study of the words, scored 768 errors. The average error rate of the control group was 7.5, while the experimental was 8.0.

Words studied by the experimental group were given to 109 students who had studied the state speller. They averaged 22.5 errors on a 26-word list. The experimental group of 91 students that had used the new approach for 15 weeks averaged 4.4 errors on the same test. Subsequent testing in grades 6 and 7 showed similar results.

To determine the development of spelling skills by students, an eighth-grade class was requested to write essays. The control group which followed the state speller had a range of spelling errors from 0 to 17; the experimental group had a range of 0 to 4.

Students using the state speller indicated that their method of learning to spell consisted of writing the words one or two times, breaking the word into syllables, or just looking at the words; a few said they did not study at all. In the experimental group students indicated they used the dictionary, wrote the words, listened to the sounds, found appropriate definitions, took trial tests with their parents, and used the words in sentences.

Students, teachers, and parents who have experienced or witnessed the latter approach to the teaching of spelling are unanimous in their expectation of success. Children *can* be taught to spell. ///

Using a dictionary, the children write the words repeatedly, and use the words in sentences.